

# GSA BUSINESS

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# HIGH DEMAND

"There's no end in sight for the demand. No one is relying less on IT."

Servosity CEO Damien Stevens



Photo by firmFOTO

Servosity a face for Upstate IT sector  
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## S.C. growth clings to 'fiscal cliff'

by **CHUCK CRUMBO**  
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**S**.C. Commerce Secretary Bobby Hitt says a number of economic development projects are waiting to be announced.

"We have more projects queued up at the Department of Commerce than anyone can remember," Hitt said at the Oct. 17 session of the 2012 Central Carolina Commercial Real Estate Market Forecast. "We're simply waiting for a board to vote. It's not a question of where, but when."

But things like the presidential election, "fiscal cliff" and sequestration are keeping companies on the sidelines.

While the election outcome may offer businesses an idea of where U.S. economic policy is headed, it may not be the most important issue.

"It doesn't matter who's president," said Timothy Koch, professor of banking and finance at the University of South Carolina's Darla Moore School of Business. "We're going to have a split Congress."

"What really matters are we going to solve this fiscal cliff or kick the can down the road?"

"Fiscal cliff" refers to the dilemma the federal government faces at the end of the year when terms of the Budget Control Act of 2011 take over.

At midnight Dec. 31, temporary payroll tax cuts expire and workers will see their paychecks drop by 2%. Additionally, businesses will lose certain tax breaks, the alternative minimum tax will increase, the so-called Bush tax cuts expire and taxes related to the federal health care law kick in.

Also, across-the-board budget cuts totaling \$1.2 trillion over the next 10 years will begin to take hold as the debt-ceiling

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**"WE WANTED TO LEVERAGE THOSE TECHNOLOGY TOOLS FOR AN INDUSTRY THAT'S PROBABLY BEHIND THE TIMES FROM A DEVELOPMENT STANDPOINT."**

Sammy Riddle, M33 Integrated Solutions  
At Work. **PAGE 19**



# IT industry booms; job candidates lag

by LIZ SEGRIST  
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Greenville-based Servosity Inc.'s recent expansion has the company in hot pursuit of computer science graduates.

The demand for the cloud, backup and disaster recovery solutions, as well as the programming, engineering, science and management that accompany it, is growing — and fast. But the IT sector faces a massive shortage in computer science graduates, both nationally and throughout South Carolina, and the gap keeps widening.

"Everybody is desperate. The demand is huge," said Duncan Buell, University of South Carolina professor in the Computer Science and Engineering Department. "There's a company in Columbia that wants to hire 100 people. Our annual output is about 80, so that's just one company that wants more than our entire output."

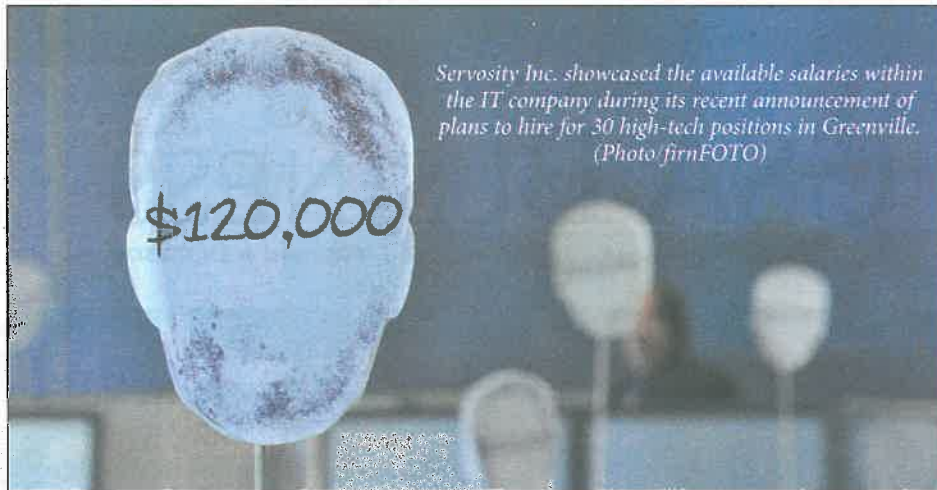
In the Upstate region, known as a hub for advanced manufacturing, Greenville is also working to make a name for itself as an emerging technology hub. EDTS, Green Cloud Technologies and Servosity, among others, have expanded throughout 2012.

Servosity, a software company that develops and supports backup and disaster recovery solutions to managed service providers and IT resellers, recently expanded at its headquarters in the Next Innovation Center in Greenville. It plans to hire for 30 IT positions.

The industry projects continued job growth, accompanied by a continued shortage of qualified workers.

Worldwide, IT spending is expected to surpass \$3.7 trillion in 2013, a 3.8% increase from 2012 projected spending of \$3.6 trillion, according to a Gartner Inc. analysis. By 2015, 1.9 million IT jobs will be generated in the U.S., the analysis said.

"But there is a challenge. There is not enough talent in the industry. Our public



Servosity Inc. showcased the available salaries within the IT company during its recent announcement of plans to hire for 30 high-tech positions in Greenville. (Photo: firmFOTO)

and private education systems are failing us. Therefore, only one-third of the IT jobs will be filled. Data experts will be a scarce, valuable commodity," said Peter Sondergaard, Gartner's senior vice president and global head of research, in the analysis.

By 2014, 30% of midsize companies will have adopted disaster recovery in the cloud, up from just over 1% today, according to Gartner.

In South Carolina, the information industry accounted for 27,000 jobs in September 2012, a 5.47% change from September 2011, according to the S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce. That growth rate surpasses all other sectors in the state.

"There's no end in sight for the demand. No one is relying less on IT," Servosity CEO Damien Stevens said. "We plan to keep hiring, but it's the highest paid positions that are the hardest to fill."

For the highest paid positions, Servosity candidates need a computer science master's degree and a 3.5 grade point average to secure a phone interview. The average starting salary is \$60,000, increasing to six figures.

The recruitment process has been very labor intensive to recruit the best and the brightest, Stevens said, as the company searches both locally and nationally. Servosity has been flying candidates in from around the country, as well as scouring the

country's top 100 computer science schools and S.C. universities for candidates.

Several factors contribute to the shortage, including the difficulty of the curriculum; the lack of effective industry marketing and the shortcomings of computer science curriculums in the K-12 system, Buell said. Students need a strong math and science foundation as well.

Computer science is rarely taught at high schools in the U.S. For example, South Carolina has a computer science requirement which can be fulfilled by learning to use a program, such as Adobe Photoshop, Duncan said. He suggests including an "Introduction to Computer Science" course to give students a better understanding of the work and career possibilities.

The burst of the dot-com bubble in the early 2000s might have deterred students as well since many thought there weren't jobs available, said Ken Weaver, Clemson University's undergraduate program coordinator for the School of Computing.

"That was never the case," Weaver said. "We've always had more jobs than students."

The industry needs to do a better job of defining the available jobs and how to obtain them, Weaver said. Technical colleges often offer IT programs to train someone to set up networks, and four-

year universities offer IT programs to train someone to write applications and design programs from the ground up.

USC has about 450 undergraduates combined in its computer science, computer information systems and computer engineering undergraduate majors, with a little more than half from the computer science and computer information systems tracks, Buell said. The programs have 40 master's and 80 Ph.D. students.

Clemson University has around 600 computer science students, with 450 of them undergraduates studying three degree programs and 150 graduate students in two Ph.D. programs and one master's degree program, Weaver said.

Entities across the state are hoping to fill the information technology and computer science pipeline.

ITology is a Columbia-based nonprofit collaboration of businesses, academic institutions and organizations dedicated to growing the IT pipeline. ITology aims to promote information technology in K-12; teach it in higher education and grow it with professionals.

"We need to start with the STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) subjects in schools," Greenville Area Development Corp. Vice President Kevin Landmesser said. "Our challenge is to make kids aware of IT."

GSA Technology Council provides networking, education and professional development opportunities to information technology professionals across the state. The Next Innovation Center nurtures high-impact, knowledge-based companies, which accompanies the Greenville Chamber's vision to increase the region's per capita personal income through high-paying jobs.

Both Clemson and USC are beginning to see an upswing on information technology and computer science students.

"There are more coming now. It's back on the upswing, but it's still way below what's necessary to fill the demand," Buell said. ☐

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